Introduction

The *NCEAD Best Practice Guidelines EAD 2002* provides a guide to the implementation of Encoded Archival Description (EAD 2002) in the NC ECHO consortium. It is intended to be used as a supplement to the EAD Application Guidelines and Tag Library, in order to further define current best practices for the use of EAD in North Carolina.

This edition includes references to the Society of American Archivists' *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (*DACS*) as well as other new sections to the encoding guidelines. It supersedes the January 2004 edition of the *NCEAD Best Practice Guidelines for EAD 2002.*

About NCEAD

NCEAD began as a collaborative Encoded Archival Description (EAD) project funded in part by the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation. Initial project participants included Duke University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina State University, and the North Carolina State Archives. The overall goals of the project were to develop best practices for encoding based on a representative sample of finding aids from the participating institutions, develop tools for effective encoding of finding aids, and explore technologies for indexing and display of XML finding aids.

In 2002, NCEAD became part of *NC Exploring Cultural Heritage Online* (NC ECHO, http://www.ncecho.org/). Membership expanded to include all interested institutions in North Carolina. Representatives from eastern, western, and central regions participate in various capacities in NCEAD, and the consortium is currently facilitated by the NC ECHO Metadata Coordinator.

The Revision Process

The Standards Working Group reviewed the January 2004 edition of the *Best Practice Guidelines.* In anticipation of the publication of *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (*DACS*), NC ECHO 2004 summer intern Peter Hymas reviewed the *Best Practice Guidelines* to reconcile the new descriptive standard with NCEAD's implementation of EAD. This work forms the primary impetus for this new edition. It was considered imperative that the standard and the *Guidelines* be reviewed to assure compliance. The Standards Working Group seeks to maintain currency and clarity with the *Best Practice Guidelines.* As a result, *DACS* rules and page numbers are referred to extensively throughout the encoding guidelines below. These *Guidelines* should be considered *DACS*-compliant.

In addition, the Standards Working Group reviewed the Best Practice Guidelines in light of a full year of encoding experience. As with all standards, guidelines for implementation must be reviewed on a regular basis to assure their consistency with application. The Standards Working Group has made several small revisions to ensure the robust and widespread implementation of EAD in North Carolina. A complete list of changes made to the NCEAD template and tools is available at http://www.ncecho.org/ncead/documents/tools2005.htm.